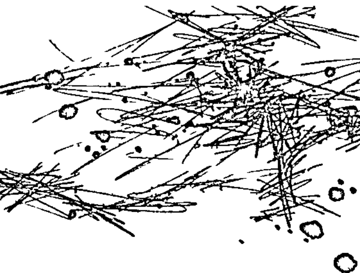
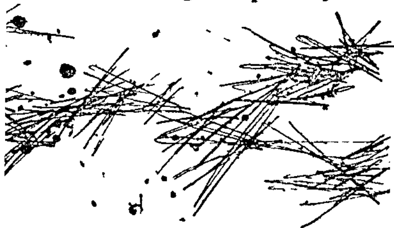


AN ORIENT PAPERBACK

edited by
gauri deshpande

an anthology of indo-english poetry




Published by
Hind Pocket Books

An Anthology of
Indo English Poetry

Published by
Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd
G T Road Delhi 110032

Cover Design by
Satish Sud

PRINTED IN INDIA

Text at
Cambridge Printing Works
Kashmere Gate Delhi 110006

Cover at
Shiksha Bharati Press
G T Road Delhi 110032

CONTENTS

Foreword

ENGLISH POETRY IN INDIA HAS NOT MADE GREAT strides in the past decade Kamala Das and Nissim Ezekiel still continue to be the ones to bring out consistently good work Daruwalla has now been added to their names The rest have developed in so haphazard and back and forth a manner as to make gain difficult to assess However a few significant advances need to be noted First this poetry has lost its self-conscious ness There are as many poets writing today in English as in any of the regional languages No special merit or stigma attaches to writing in English Also it has cast off its derivative origins and is now based as poetry in all languages not on an alien literature but on the life and experiences of the poets who write it These writers are concerned with the work of writers in other languages not as models but as literary experience Third, this writing now seems to have become commercially viable In the last few years no less than 5 anthologies and as many journals making space for original Indian writing in

English have been marketed Finally the poetry is serious It is no longer the spare time activity of dilettanti but a major preoccupation of its writers

In spite of all this optimism and self congratulation are a little premature because of some sad and obvious facts on the debit side The most glaring is a paucity of diction There are a few poets in whom gauntness is the deliberate effect of pruning (like Parthasarathy) but in many an individual poet a repetitiveness of vocabulary phraseology and construction is noticeable In a poet like Pritish Nandy it is too pervasive to be anything but lazi ness Only after wading through thirty unrewarding pages does one come across a lyric like Near Desha priya Park In someone like Kamala Das this paucity is more a matter of echoes of familiar moods in all her work and is clearly the result of a subject matter that quickly catagorises itself (She and in general all the women poets must be given credit however, for coming to terms with the man woman relationship in blunt bitter and concrete terms where the men still pussyfoot around in metaphor metaphysics and roundaboutation)

Not that repetition or bareness in themselves are an evil but in the general absence of vivid strange rich or startling usage they suggest that the poet is played out rather than controlled or understated K D Katrak is one of the very few exceptions delighting in a multi textured abstruse and strange vocabulary In the field of imagery on the other

hand the poets have gained by adhering to concrete and actual images which lend their work immediacy and verisimilitude Pritish Nandy alone tends still to an incredible landscape divorced from all reality, that is interesting for its quaint fantasy if not repeated too often To illustrate what I mean by an economical use of everyday language to create a fresh and yet realistic image take Parthasarathy s line A storm of churches breaks about my eyes To see how strange and mysterious words can still make a vivid and actual image take a look at this, from Katrak Do not be taken in Let not memory of your mother s lap / Nostalgic prancing on a sister s knee love of your wife s mouth / becloud what remains of reason/ As you watch Her sit amidst oceanic grapes and olives / The crescent moon chained to her mundane slippers / Her mantle of stars beginning to glow/ As our Father Sun slips to his perihilion und r water / Butchered as usual sent to his burial station/ In under belly of octopus and squid And compare these two images for immediacy verisimilitude, economy or strangeness with these lines from Nandy, which seem as though they have no real reason to stop flowing since they are devoid of context or meaning and their only *raison d etre* is sound since you spoke of history and the wild rose withering on a familiar face when mysterious tangents of sense intersect each other and the sun blinds with gold the filigreed leaves on a battered soul

The more damaging defect of Indian poetry in English is its slavish involvement with King s

English have been marketed Finally the poetry is serious It is no longer the spare time activity of dilettanti but a major preoccupation of its writers

In spite of all this optimism and self congratulation are a little premature because of some sad and obvious facts on the debit side The most glaring is a paucity of diction There are a few poets in whom gauntness is the deliberate effect of pruning (like Parthasarathy) but in many an individual poet a repetitiveness of vocabulary phraseology and construction is noticeable In a poet like Pritish Nandy it is too pervasive to be anything but laziness Only after wading through thirty unrewarding pages does one come across a lyric like Near Deshapriya Park In someone like Kamala Das this paucity is more a matter of echoes of familiar moods in all her work and is clearly the result of a subject matter that quickly catagorises itself (She and in general all the women poets must be given credit however for coming to terms with the man woman relationship in blunt bitter and concrete terms where the men still pussyfoot around in metaphor metaphysics and roundaboutation)

Not that repetition or bareness in themselves are an evil but in the general absence of vivid strange rich or startling usage they suggest that the poet is played out rather than controlled or understated K D Katrak is one of the very few exceptions delighting in a multi textured abstruse and strange vocabulary In the field of imagery on the other

and seems to be turning back to it now most of the poets have stuck to free verse K D Katrak s two books contain some poems in the stanza form and some others like Rakshat Puri and Parthasarathy use the unrhymed stanza in a more or less arbitrary and whimsical form

I record here sadly the absence of light hearted verse This is not to say that we are solemn bores but on the whole we are lacking a sense of wryness about life Life is seen dramatically with a response almost exclusively emotional Here again as always there are a few exceptions but not enough to detract substantially from the above statement There are Ezekiel s poems for children (For Kalpana and 'For Elkana , included here) there is the second book of K.D Katrak s verses there are a couple of poems even by Daruwalla (The Contrari ness of Dreams not included here) and Partha sarathy (Breasts in his long poem Touch , included here) But even in the work of these writers such poems are a rarity There has never been a large output of light verse in India in English not even limericks or doggerel Incidentally, while working as a poetry selector for a large weekly some time ago I found a goodly number of sly humorous and satirical verses in the daily post It is true that the quality left a lot to be desired but the impulse was there Amateur poets from students to stock brokers were moved to write humorous verse Why then do the salient practitioners of verse suppress it totally? Even irony is only marginally present

English as it was handed out in schools and colleges Except for Nissim Ezekiel (his poems in Indian English) none made a serious effort to change the standard English learnt from textbooks And even Ezekiel spoils the effort finally by writing down or with a humorous intent only in Indian English The rest have been content with an exclamatory inter polation or two a few words denoting family rela tionships a few historical or mythical allusions that cannot be anglicised This failure is even more serious in the face of the strange and wonderful changes wrought in prose rhythms and constructions by fiction writers like Raja Rao to say nothing of such startling usage as black American speech Neither has the Indian English poet experimented with form if you set aside such bizarre forays in other arts as visual poetry pictorial poetry and typo graphical poetry The prose poems of Pritish Nandy and Kamala Das are the only experiments and they too are not innovations in the *field* only in the Indian English branch of it Some examples are included in this volume and since the devices used,—strong prose rhythms alliterations repetitions internal rhythm —are common to both prose and poetry it must be left to the reader to decide whether to call them prosepoetry or poetic prose Perhaps it was not too unreasonable to expect espe cially the Indian poet to assay some daring experi ment in form for all of us are well aquainted with the totally different poetics of at least one Indian language It is true nevertheless that none has attempted a fusion of Indian and English metres Also with the exception of Ezekiel who wrote in the rhymed stanza form till 1964 (*The Exact Name*)

and seems to be turning back to it now most of the poets have stuck to free verse K D Katrak s two books contain some poems in the stanza form and some others like Rakshat Puri and Parthasarathy use the unrhymed stanza in a more or less arbitrary and whimsical form

I record here sadly the absence of light hearted verse This is not to say that we are solemn bores but on the whole we are lacking a sense of wryness about life Life is seen dramatically with a response almost exclusively emotional Here again as always there are a few exceptions but not enough to detract substantially from the above statement There are Ezekiel s poems for children (For Kalpana and For Elkana, included here) there is the second book of K D Katrak s verses there are a couple of poems even by Daruwalla (The Contrari ness of Dreams, not included here) and Partha sarathy (Breasts in his long poem Touch included here) But even in the work of these writers such poems are a rarity There has never been a large output of light verse in India in English not even limericks or doggerel Incidentally while working as a poetry selector for a large weekly some time ago I found a goodly number of sly humorous and satirical verses in the daily post It is true that the quality left a lot to be desired but the impulse was there Amateur poets from students to stock-brokers were moved to write humorous verse Why then do the salient practitioners of verse suppress it totally? Even irony is only marginally present

On the same grounds I would acquit the Indian English poet of lacking a social consciousness One might rail against him as a *man* for not having what one classifies as a social conscience but as a poet he must be allowed to choose his subject where he feels most strongly It is ridiculous to fault a poet like Kamala Das on account of her predominantly personal subject matter If any one of us is gifted enough both with poetic ability and a social conscience *and* the capacity to combine them more power to him but if not let him to himself be true That way we avoid the supreme hypocrisy of lip service mouthing undigested philosophies empty platitudes and sterile pity Anyone reading poems like Gieve Patel s Public Hospital Peeradina s Bandra my own Elegy for a Friend or Ezekiel s Entertainment cannot escape being aware of the self-disgust evident there This too, is social conscience, but with a sad sort of an anger and not the revolutionary violence which the pundits of social change would have every one feel Perhaps the understatement and the resigned awareness of futility are not loud enough for everyone to notice it cannot be denied that they too are a strong and insistent species of an awareness of the 40 per cent that live below the level of poverty around us

The three major omissions from this volume Dom Moraes Ramanujan and P Lal would strike most readers The first two can hardly be called Indian any more having spent most of the last decade abroad and having settled there in spite of visits home P Lal has been engaged almost entirely

upon his mammoth transcreation of the *Maha bharata over the last few years* and *has not pro* duced significant original work during that time Since I have tried to get the most recent work of the poets included here he had to be left out A few other poets whose collections are not particularly noteworthy but whose individual talent is encoura ging are here with one poem each The other so called more established poets are represented by five to ten poems each (with the exception of Adil *Jussawalla) thus making this a representative, yet* select volume of the most recent English poetry in India There can be many opinions depending upon the editor s taste about how many *more* poets should have been included and who they should have been That is a matter of individual indiosyncracy There can hardly be any cavilling however about those that *are* here

I urge upon the reader again the deft touch in the medium of Kamala Das and Nissim Ezekiel Rakshat Puri and Parthasarathy are representative of the more cerebrative and economical kind of poetry K D Katrak is lush provocative and very readable Nandy is innovative and profuse Patel understated analytical but powerfully affecting Daruwalla surprising stimulating vivid and one of the very best A good and satisfying crop

GAURI DESHPANDE

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Born 1924

Reader in American Literature University of Bombay Five collections of verse including The Unfinished Man (*1960*) *and* The Exact Name (*1965*) *Also* Three Plays (*1969*) *Editor* An Emerson Reader, A Martin Luther King Reader, A Rajaji Reader Indian Writers in Conference Writing in India *etc Has written and broadcast extensively on art and literature Was Visiting Professor University of Leeds 1964 Lectured and gave readings of his poems at a number of American colleges and universities in 1967 Member General Council Lalit Kala Akademi and Sahitya Akademi General Editor* Indian Poetry Series *and* University Textbook Series *He is married with three children and lives in Bombay*

Nissim Ezekiel

Island

Unsuitable for song as well as sense
the island flowers into slums
and skyscrapers reflecting
precisely the growth of my mind
I am here to find my way in it

Sometimes I cry for help
but mostly keep my own counsel
I hear distorted echoes
of my own ambiguous voice
and of dragons claiming to be human

Bright and tempting breezes
flow across the island
separating past from future
then the air is still again
as I sleep the sleep of ignorance

How delight the soul with absolute
sense of salvation how
hold to a single willed direction ?
I cannot leave the island
I was born here and belong

Even now a host of miracles
hurries me to daily business
minding the ways of the island
as a good native should
taking calm and clamour in my stride

Entertainment

The monkey show is on—
patient girl on haunches
holds the strings
a baby in her arms
Two tiny monkeys
in red and purple pantaloons
prepare to dance
Crowd collects
forms a circle
Naked to the waist
the Master of Ceremonies
drums frenzy cracks whip
calls the tricks
to earn applause and copper coins
The circle thickens as the plot thickens
children laugh the untouchable women
smooth their hair   A coolie
grins at me his white teeth
gleam in the sunlight
Only the monkeys are sad
and suddenly
the baby begins to cry
Anticipating time for payment
the crowd dissolves
some in shame part
with the smallest coin they have,
the show moves on

Goodbye Party For Miss Pushpa T S

Friends
our dear sister
is departing for foreign
in two three days
and
we are meeting today
to wish her bon voyage

You are all knowing friends
what sweetness is in *Miss Pushpa*
I don't mean only external sweetness
but internal sweetness
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
even for no reason
but simply because she is feeling

Miss Pushpa is coming
from very high family
Her father was renowned advocate
in Bulsar or Surat
I am not remembering now which place

Surat ? Ah, yes
once only I stayed in Surat
with family members
of my uncle's very old friend—

his wife was cooking nicely
that was long time ago

Coming back to *Miss Pushpa*
she is most popular lady
with men also and ladies also

Whenever I asked her to do anything
she was saying Just now only
I will do it That is showing
good spirit I am always
appreciating the good spirit

Pushpa Miss is never saying no
whatever I or anybody is asking
she is always saying yes
and today she is going
to improve her prospects
and we are wishing her bon voyage

Now I ask other speakers to speak
and afterwards *Miss Pushpa*
will do the summing up

Cry

Breathe
My breath
And let me
Breathe yours
Bodies
Savouring
Phenomena
Sifting
Passion
To the fine
Point
Of penetration
Luminous
Obscene
Noumena
Breath
Of my
Breath of my
Being

On Bellasis Road

I see her first
as colour only
poised against the faded
red of a post box
purple sari yellow blouse
green bangles orange
flowers in her hair

A moment later
I sense her as a woman
bare as her feet
beneath the shimmer

Then I look at her
the colour disappears
she s short thin and dark
without a cage to her name
as low as she can go

She doesn t glance at me
waiting for her
hawker or mill worker
coolie or bird man
fortune teller
pavement man of medicine
or street barber on the move

I see her image now
as through a telescope
without a single
desperate moral
to keep it in focus
remote and close up
Of what use then to see and think ?
I cannot even say I care or do not care
perhaps it is a kind of despair

For Elkana

The warm April evening
tempts us to the breezes
sauntering across the lawn
We drag our chairs down
the stone steps and plant them there
unevenly to sit or rather sprawl
in silence till the words begin to come
My wife as is her way
surveys the scene comments
on a broken window pane
suggests a thing or two
that every husband in the neighbourhood
knows exactly how to do
except of course the man she loves
who happens to be me
Unwilling to dispute
the obvious fact
that she is always right
I turn towards the more
attractive view that opens up
behind my eyes and shuts her out
Her voice crawls up and down the lawn
our son who is seven
hears it—and it reminds him of something
He stands before us
his small legs well apart
crescent moon like chin uplifted

eyes hard and cold
to speak his truth
in masterly determination
Mummy I want my dinner, now
Wife and husband in unusual rapport
share one unspoken thought
Children Must Be Disciplined
She looks at me I look away
The son is waiting In another second
he will repeat himself
Wife wags a finger
firmly delivers verdict Wait
In five minutes I ll serve you dinner
No says the little one
not in five minutes now
I am hungry
It occurs to me the boy is like his father
I love him as I love myself
Wait darling wait
Mummy says wait for five minutes
But I am hungry now
declaims the little bastard in five minutes
I won t be hungry any more
This argument appeals to me
Such a logician deserves his dinner
    straightaway
My wife s delightful laughter
holds the three of us together
We rise and go into the house

KAMALA DAS

Born 1934

Two volumes of verse in print Also many books of short stories and an autobiography in Malayalam Was awarded the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Prize in 1967 for Thanuppu *Has written for* Opinion The Illustrated Weekly of India Poetry East and West *and other journals here and abroad A selection of her poems in English* The Old Play House and Other Poems *has just been published She is married with three children and lives in Bombay*

Kamala Das

Advice To Fellow-Swimmers

When you learn to swim
do not enter a river that has no ocean
to flow into one ignorant of destinations
and knowing only the flowing as its destiny,
like the weary rivers of the blood
that bear the scum of ancient memories
but go swim in the sea
go swim in the great blue sea
Where the first tide you meet is your body
that familiar pest
but if you learn to cross it
you are safe yes beyond it you are safe
For even sinking would make no difference
then

Lines Addressed To A Devadasi

Ultimately there comes a time
When all faces look alike
All voices sound similar
And trees and lakes and mountains
Appear to bear a common signature
It is then that you walk past your friends
And not recognise
And hear their questions but pick
No meaning out of words
It is then that your desires cease
And a homesickness begins
And you sit on the temple steps
A silent Devadasi lovelorn
And aware of her destiny

Cat In The Gutter

He said I am a red rag wherever I walk
I am recognised I cannot so often come
To sit at your bedside get well
Come to my place again as you used to do
He was yesterday s old rag today thrown
On the garbage heap for such who would
care ?
He need not have feared at all but
Cowardice was his favourite diet
So who would tell him that when he made
love
Grunting groaning and sighing
That with no soul to overpower me
Only his robust limbs
I was just a high bred kitten
Rolling for fun in the gutter .

Beauty Was A Short Season

Happiness
Yes
That was a moment or two
And beauty
A short season
For what hazy cause we outlive
Like gnarled fruit trees
The fecund season ?

The Fancy-Dress Show

Every virtue requires today
A fancy dress the cassock is
The priests main virtue the clever
Politician dons a saint s mean
Apparel The only ash is
On the legitimate forehead
And the holy water is in
The right container Confessions
Are mumbled regularly in the dark
The patriots have survived their
Long fasts the children of the poor
Have not been so lucky we hear
A pity The city morgues are
Full of unclaimed cadavers yes
God is in his heaven and all
Is right with this stinking world

The Morning At Apollo Pier

Welcome me lying down dear love
And remain so
I shall shut the window
For upward floats the lepers tremolo

It is morning now at Apollo Pier
There is a choppy sea and on the pavem
Like sleek birds freed from cag
beautiful men
Inadequately loved walking
To find a fatigue in their limbs

You ask me what I saw today I saw
The cripple stump along hunger was bot
His crutch and his limb I saw the jerk
walk
Of the very young the baby s smile
saw
The beauty of the ageing male the f
Blanched in cool rooms like flow
bleached by rains
The haunches softened the steel in the h
The knowledge in the eye

They tell me all my friends that I
finished
"hat I can write no more they tell me

That the goose which laid the golden eggs can lay
No more they tell me that your love is
A morass where I must sink if not today
Tomorrow But, hold me hold me once again
Kiss the words to death in my mouth plunder
Memories I hide my defeat in your
Wearying blood and all my fears and shame
You are the poem to end all poems
A poem absolute as the tomb
Your flawed beauty is my only refuge
Oh love me love me until I die

Middle Age

Middle age is when your children are no longer
Firends but critics stern of face and severe with their tongue
It s the time when like pupae they burst their cocoons and
Emerge in harsh adult glory
and they no longer
Need you except for serving tea and for pressing
Clothes but you need them all the same and badly too so
That when left alone you touch their books and things and
Weep a little secretly
Middle age is when your son to whom you sent
Once upon a time the squirrels invitation to their
Jungle feast writing in golden ink and posting
It at night turns round in disgust crying you have lived
In a dream world all your life it s time to wake up Mother
You are no longer so young you know

Death Of The Goat

The only woman of the house was ill
The one who used to run about at home
Like a mad dervish busy with her chores
The one whose hollow cheeks and
spindly legs
Made the children say oh mother you
look
So much like a goat!
When they wheeled her into the hospital
She opened wide her delirious eyes and
said
Please let me go
I smell the Tur Dal burning

A Losing Battle

How can my love hold him when the other
Flaunts a gaudy lust and is lioness
To his Beast? Men are worthless to
  trap them
Use the cheapest bait of all but never
Love which in a woman must mean tears
And a silence in the blood

The Prisoner

As the convict studies
His prison s geography
I study the trappings
of your body dear love
For I must som day find
An escape from its snare

R PARTHASARATHY

Born 1934

Educated at Bombay During 1963 64 British Council Scholar at Leeds University Is Regional Editor Oxford University Press Indian Branch Madras Poems yet to be collected have appeared in periodicals and anthologies including Encounter The Illustrated Weekly of India London Magazine Indian and Foreign Review Opinion Poetry India Quest A Review of English Literature The Times Literary Supplement Commonwealth Poems of Today (*London 1967*) Contemporary Indian Poetry in English (*Bombay 1973*) New Voices of the Commonwealth (*London 1968*) Pergamon Poets 9 Poetry from India and Young Commonwealth Poets 65 (*London 1965*) *Was awarded the first Ulka Poetry Prize for 1966 sponsored by* Poetry India *He is married and lives in Madras*

R Parthasarathy

This Business

It doesn t make any sense
to me either
This business of poetry

Who the hell cares
If an entire lifetime is burnt
up in a page ?

They died young If Keats
had never lived
or an elephant crushed Bharati

the history of the race
would be exactly the same
I am often dissatisfied

with it—the only thing
I can do reasonably well
Yet I write

and reach after the dead
by breaking
this bread of poetry

A Question Of Syntax

The wick of last year burnt out
rain dripped like wax
They met in a room with pictures

of Goan churches humped on the wall
No meeting is ever a complete surprise
the intimate talk comma of hand

on the waist and happiness
in parenthesis are the usual syntax
of the mind on these occasions

The conversation over black coffee
was only pathic They looked for words
with the knives and forks of silence

The Trumpet Sun

Ears of earth
are never deaf to the spiked song
of the trumpet sun
Time
with wind and wave
for fingers
plays on four stops of seasons
Plays
loudest in summer
after the low whistle of spring
And the long ovation of leaves falling
leaves the trumpet sun
mute
in the snow

Tamil

My tongue in English chains
I return after
a generation to you

I am at the end
of my Dravidic tether,
hunger for you unassuaged

I falter stumble
Speak in a tired language
wrenched from its sleep

in the *Kural*
teeth palate lips still new
to its agglutinative touch

Now hooked on celluloid
you go reeling
down plush corridors

Looking Into A Mirror

Over a horizon of noises
the clock strikes
I rise as sleep melts
on the Himalayas

of bedclothes And face
the mirror in the bath
True friend only you
tell no lies Now that

all the silver
at the back of faces
I have loved has worn off
You have me under lock

and key for good
I am silent
Eyes saccadic I stare
at myself Often

confront a stranger
in the scratched glass
older perhaps
who resembles my father

Rough Passage

Mortal as I am I face
the end with unspeakable
relief knowing
how I should feel
if I were stopped and cut off

Were I to clutch at the air
straw in my extremity
how should I not scream
I haven't finished ?
Yet that too would pass unheeded

Love I haven't the key
to unlock His gates
Night curves I grasp your hand
in a rainbow of touch Of the dead
I speak nothing but good

Touch

You have trusted your life to a single
hair don't struggle or you will
break it
CESARE PAVESE *Il Mestiere di Vivere*

I

The body sputters your flesh
was the glass
that cupped its hands over me

Hours glowed
to incandescence An uneasy
world swarmed around us

Now only the thought of you
(live coals I blow on)
burns distance to a stub

II

Observe the town in a haze
Under the heavy lens of noon
passion quicker

Than candles burns
smoking the glass of their bodies
The haze lifts

Evening disfigures
vision   stones of the day
turn phantoms

But in the dark
hands and lips
have marked the spot they touched

Still as crockery these two
rinsed and dried
after half a day s legitimate use

III

I am all fingers when it comes
to touching them   Their fullness
keeps the eyes peeled

with excitement   A nipple hardens
on the tongue   Here
pleasure is elliptic wholesome

IV

Tonight I breathe on your skin
it clouds over
Soon it will reflect nothing

(my limp tongue thicken
in your furrow

delicately sniffs at odours
from seasoned flesh)
inexpugnable sometimes

sleeved in a childhood
I cannot overtake O night
darker than ever in our arms

V

It is night alone helps
to achieve a lucid exclusiveness
Time that had dimmed

your singular form
by its harsh light now makes
recognition possible

through this opaque lens
Touch brings the body into focus
restores colour to inert hands

till the skin takes over
erasing angularities and the four walls
turn on a strand of hair

K. N. DARUWALLA

Born 1937

Joined the Indian Police Service in 1958 Two volumes of Poetry Under Orion *and* Apparition In April *Poems have appeared in* Opinion The Illustrated Weekly of India Transatlantic Review (*London*) Trace Antioch Review Poet Lore Poet and Critic (*all U.S.A.*) Poetry Australia (*Sidney*) *and other Journals at home and abroad He is married and lives in Lucknow*

K N Daruwalla

Black Rain

I cannot cry like you
shoulders hunched into a knot of pain
and the face breaking into a thousand
pieces
I must stand erect my eyes
spaceless and open too much blinking
against the cold wind and they may think
I am holding back tears

I must live with my grief
as a stone breaker lives with his vocation
must feed them on the thirteenth day on
plantain leaves
go to office with a shaved head
hang my coat on a peg and *pretend*
that nothing has happened

The roles are reversed in a way
not exactly for that would look stage
managed
but others are crying around you today
As live ash sizzles on the cold river
like a dying passion
it takes all the strength in me

to restrain a shiver
And yet with all the cold despair around
this sterile moment oozing thin black rain
I envy you the quiver
with which your tears came
and your relief

As for me grey hair roots
sprouting from the scalp next week
may be my only catharsis

Easy And Difficult Animals

(To Khurshid)

You have no problems such as mine
you do not cower
from your own thoughts
 it doesn't frighten you
the iron edge awaking from its rust
the crawl of oxidized dreams
 in lonely hours

Where do you get your insights from
and your simple words ?
teaching our daughter that day you said
 some dreams are animals
 some dreams are birds

The moonface was either
 turned towards light
 or away from it
dark fruit / incandescent fruit
Your distinctions were a knife
that went cutting to the root
You divided in two
this animal delirium that we call life
into easy animals / difficult animals
All that moved on legs
 flew on wings
 crawled on the belly

inhaled through fins
hedgehog and weasel and polecat
all that went to the taxidermist
gizzard and buzzard and bat
you lumped together as easy animals
and pitched against this menagerie
one solitary cry
that one difficult animal
that was I

Death Of A Bird

Under an overhang of crags
fierce bird love
the monals mated clawed and screamed
the female brown and nondescript
the male was a king a fire dream!
My barrel spoke one word of lead
the bird came down the king was dead

or almost dying
his eyes were glazed the breast still
throbbed.
We tucked him pulsing as he was in our
rucksack.
The female rose in terror crying !
With bird blood on our hands we walked
and as the skies broke into rags
of mist why did our footsteps drag ?

The cumulus piled on the crags
We smote the pony on its shanks
to hurry him around a bend
he swivelled and went down the flank
of rock a thousand feet below
to where the roaring river flowed

His scream
climbed up the gorge a nightmare fang

which ploughed my blistered dreams and
sowed
begging children
Depressed a bit we took the road
walking like ciphers disinterred
from some forgotten code

Dusk caught up with us and bears
my terror gun spat at the shades
but missed each time
When jackals howled sniffing ribs
trembling she asked if they were wolves?
I simply held her hand in mine

and walked on further to a cave
hemmed in by pine
we would have missed
but for a growling bhotia dog
the resin tappers left behind
to guard their cans and beaded ichor
pimpling like a spray of cysts
Just yards off an escarpment wrote
hieroglyphs on a scroll of mist
And as she crumpled with a chill
I lit fire of turf and peat
and rubbed her clotted sides and feet
and found her waking in my hands
(this shadow pair of quickening hands)
like embers in a shadow net
In the wet lanes of her body
we apprehensive met

And as we rose to the final kill
—two electric saws meeting on a hill

in the marrowing bones of a fractured tree—
each of us thought the other was free
of the pony s scream and the monal s wings
and the prowling bears in the firelight rim

Her head on my heartbeat hair locked in my fingers
she purred into sleep the night seemed to flower
late with our dreams
for the moon came out just for an hour or two
and the monal wings came feathering down
in a passion of dusky gold and blue
And the wolves with the mist went over the cliff
—but for the wind we both would have dreamt
the very same dream of quiescence and love
but the wind was a thorn in the flesh of the night
and moaned aloud like a watch in the flue

I broke my gun in two across the back
of an ash grey dawn A brown bird left the crags
flying strongly and as its shadow crossed us
it shrieked with fear and turned to stone

He had mastered the bull within him
    and the bull without
nonchalant he could turn his back
on incensed horns
he had withdrawn
from a faithless girl
halfway through an intercourse
—just to show his control

Ah! the banderillero
extrovert as skin
handsome as the sun !
  Toro hah hah and as the bull charges
the crowd is a mass hysteria
for no one had seen this before
so elegantly surely dangerously
he placed the banderillas
so elegantly surely dangerously
he placed the cortas!
Till once at five in the afternoon
as he treaded the bullring
(no one had known
he was constipated that day)
an unfinished bull
bristling with banderillas
finished him an hour
after five in the afternoon
(the legends were many
he had waved to his girlfriend at the
    moment of truth
slipped on a banana peel
the bull was cock eyed double visioned

and had turned the wrong way
into the wrong vision)

I wail for him
king of a hundred wives
lord of two hundred thighs
(His kingdom was so big
it extended to half his harem)
You only had to clang a bell
and if he wasn t drunk
or whoring or sleeping
he doled out instant justice
When the battle rolled over to his door
he doused his elephant with drink
and getting hold of a spear charged
(the spear was the only
sober thing on the elephant)
No wonder the enemy ran
He won every battle
except the last—against syphilis

I wail for the espionaut
the gold fingered Bond
the lone wolf pitched
against international combines
He has eyes that outdistance telescopes
biceps that outmuscle iron
few beds can stand
the rigours of his virility
Enormous the scientific
and sexual gadgetry at his command
But aren t we getting stale with all this

the stance and the maleness both out of
date?

I wait
for this
stupid
romanticised
non existant male

Aag-Matam

(The Fire mourning)

Alams held aloft the procession comes
(a thought blisters along the arid skull
so also shoulder high the Imam s enemies
carried his severed head spiked to a spear)
Alams held aloft green sluiced with stained topaz
—the green which the arab soul hungers for
spliced with the brown realities of the desert—
the procession emerges from the Imambara

The fire bed is fanned with a reed mat
and sparks fly as if wind had scattered
a concourse of glow worms Calling on his name
and the grief that was his and the iron claw
of fate
that marked him for its quarry
they stamp barefoot across the fire stubble
Even children tread the star clay of this patch
cinder and fire ash rising to their knees
as the amplifiers urge them on Lovers of the
Imam
moths to the flame of Husain come!

Their thirst is a desert as they take the firewalk
their eyes are already on Karbala and
heads that rolled and the babe Ali Ashar
Duldul the faithful horse frothing the sword
in Husain s uplifted hand like a scythe
and waiting for him the harvest of spears !

6th Moharram, 1393

Between the Imambara and the Rumi Gate
traffic has clotted like an epileptic tongue
the mourners neither press forward nor recede
their torsos swaying over rooted legs
like the upper reaches of a windlashed tree
Behind the veil a woman murmurs to her child
the spreading weal across their chest recalls
the omen red of the Karbala sun

Someone quotes the mother of the Imam
as she bemoaned the lightning burns of fate
Such are the hardships
that have swooped on me that if
they fell upon the days
they would have turned to nights!
The breast beating thuds away as the
lament rises Hai Husain ! Husain ! Husain !
This mourning isn t ritual it is personal
this heritage of grief passed by father to son
this rose bleeding endless through the desert
of time

Before passion such as this
you can only offer humility !
They have awaited moharram
like a tree aching for leaf !

They long for him to walk
the firebed of their dreams !
And even as the body shrivels like a fig
they wet their lips with your name Husain !

Haranag

I

The bamboo jungle grew around our house
an arthritic forest
of tangled bone
spiked with leaf

You couldn't cut it
the stems had hardened so
The chopped limbs could not be moved
they were interlaced like bone shards
in a multiple fracture
You couldn't burn it after the rains
—it was too green
and if you burnt it in June
half the town would go cindering with it

and so the jungle stayed
and in its shadow
the porcupine and the bamboo viper

II

We all have our superstitions
mine are snakes,
no instinct fear
of flashing eye and coil

nor is my past
mined with lariat traumas
of the umbilical cord
but a fear almost rational
for after each serpent dawn
disaster struck
news of sickness news of death
and near at home once after he appeared
a dehydrating baby
inching towards delirium

Then on the fifth night of *Shravan*
(when Garur the eagle god
is said to sweat with fear)
and we like others
had made a Sheshnag
from lashed blades of straw
and offered it milk in an earthen bowl
and grain the hind legs
of our dog Tiger
froze paralytic
His lungs strained and heaved
like a pair of bellows—broke
Pointing out the purple tongue
the Vet who only a minute ago
had treated him for colic said
Sure as death, he died of snake bite

III

Nor gravel on the driveway
nor carbolic acid

kept him from the house
Twice he appeared
in the bathroom facing the jungle
and each time she ran screaming
    Haranag ! Haranag !

I kept my stick
in the bathroom now

One day as she undressed
turning her head she of a sudden saw
him luminous with deathly fires
green of body and golden irised
eyeing her intently as a rapist
In naked terror she screamed
(Later she did not remember
if it hissed whether its eyes
were elliptical or round
All that remained with her
were thirst impressions
and a feel of oil)

This time I reached him in time
no sin fear could keep my arm away
(I was particularly angry
that she was naked)
The stick came down in repetitive rage
on a shimmering dance of coils
and his innards lay scatter gunned on the
                                        floor

When I reached her she shook
like a vibrating leaf

At night she said ' We must make amends
and offer milk and grain again
I agreed and started pouring
a most pungent eye-drop
and found her eye ball scuttling north
into the forest of the upraised lid
leaving behind a white-desert-eye
and again I found her trembling
like a trapped bird
facing the serpent hood

The Epileptic

I

Suddenly the two children
flew from her side
like severed wings

Thank God the burden in her belly
stayed where it was

The rickshaw puller was a study in guilt
it was too much for him
the convulsionary and her frightened kids
floundering about in a swarm of limbs

A focus in the brain
or some such flap
the look had gone from the mother s eyes
the way her children
had flown from her lap

The husband dug through the mound
that was her face forced the mouth wide
plucked out the receding tongue
warped into a clotted wound
and put a gag between her teeth

The traffic ground
to an inquisitive halt A crowd senses
a mishap before it sees one
They fanned her rubbed her feet and
looked around
for other ways to summon back her senses
A pedestrian whispered
Her seizures are cyclic
they visit her in her menses

She was not hysteric she didn t rave
her face was flushed abstract the
marionette
head jerked from side to side a slave
to cross pulls A thin edge of froth
simmered round her lips
like foam dregs left by a receding wave

The hospital doctors frowned with
thought
light words like *petit mal* were tied
to the heavies psychomotor
epilepsy
a physician pointed out with pride
the spike and wave electrical activity
prescribed belladonna and paraldehyde

Just when he said she isn t shaping
too well she recovered bleached white
and utterly raped
As a limp awareness slouched along her
face

At Bansa

His hand came up to his tartar beard
in archaic salute
Take her to the mosque at Bansa he said
on the night preceding
the first friday of the month
Inshallah ! She shall be cured

and so to Bansa
on the night when the moon
was an ellipse

Suddenly you find
that everybody is here
thin scrawny girls
carved out of a single thigh
hysteric quail like brides
banging their foreheads on the floor
and loose fleshed women
with foetus and a demon
in their ballooned bellies

It was a village like any other village
mustard fields incised by dirt tracks
tumorous outgrowths of mud and wattle
and here and there a patch of stonework
—beginnings in a new atrophy
Around one mud house

white chalk prints of a palm
—Khamza the protecting hand of
Fatima—
ran all along the wall

The hawkers sell a pulp of gram
steaming poisonously spiced
Lost among them is a face
where age and grime have dug themselves
His wares are papers where thick black
ink
in thick black squares interrelates
the 28 arab alphabets
with 28 houses of the moon

You ve got me wrong
It is not an esoteric carnival
—gnostic papyri and pentacle
subtle divination and brute exorcism
with a hundred frenzies
cavorting round the mosque

only the ritual mascara
which is pencilled on each eye
is talismanic

Otherwise
it is a *ma ar* like all *ma ars*
you receive the *tabaruk* on bended knees
you kiss the stone and make a secret wish
releasing it like a partridge
from your inner pocket

A filigreed chandelier
sheds its lambence on the grave
The *Mujawirs* that lie in wait
are vultures/quacks/ simpletons
a few are even genuine
—echoes of an ancient ululation

Wrapped in a green tahmat he comes
this black bearded silhouette
bare feet approaching with
padded animal softness
In low melodic murmurs he intones
suras from the Quran
—kindled arabesques
that unwind from his mouth
like a thread of light
With a black finger end he smears
mascara on her eyelash
Daughter! your troubles are at an
end !

K D KATRAK

Born 1936

Managing Director of an advertising agency Two books of verse in print has written for Opinion Quest Poetry India The Illustrated Weekly of India *Has won many awards for advertising including Advertising Club Award Air India Trophy Commercial Artists Guild Award He is married has one child and lives in Bombay*

K D Katrak

Poems From An Immurement

I

The Descent

Fascism is the opiate of the Elite
Illness is the refuge of Magicians
These are facts though you will not hear of
   them from me
Wild horses will not extract my teeth
My lips are sealed by awful oaths
of secrecy and furtive kisses

All polarities all hoary dialectics
Rites of passage from Thing to Opposite
Gather at the threshold of the thirty seventh
Birth anniversary of the blessed and most
   venerable
Kersasp

Forwards my hearties   Or at least
   backwards

A last philosophizing before they stick the salin
drip
Into my crotch This is the result
Of years of joyful constipation
Gathering light to oneself living off
People s blood shining like a tarnished sun
And labelling the buffoon Kersy

Methinks the Bhikshu doth protest too muc

Do you feel it lad a loosening of bowels
An earthquake Hear the rumble ?
End of world

Eee you bastard take your injection away
No no no take your big fat lobotomy away
I am not Ezra Pound

Tell yonder ghost in the corner to leave
It offendeth mine eyeballs avast ye ghoul !

And tell finally Usha to keep her fingers cro
And her legs I shall return
Meanwhile
Me erectile muscles is ruined
Bank balance leaks I hear
Me good friend N— is a mess

Forwards lads !

Aah He s coming He s coming
He s going to save the world

Lazarus come forth
Sorry luv my name is Legion

II

The Conspiracy

Cannot help feeling the texture of science fiction
Though no bug eyed monsters here
Nor interstellar rape nor intelligent cloud forms from Andromeda
Invasion of intergalactic spores nor curva tures of hyperspace
Though that angle in wall is odd reflections of light
From porcelain basin marginally incorrect and the hollow
Of my palm not the right shape

Wilt not leave me alone ? Friends
With current gossip letters addressed to a name
Unmistakably mine flowers for me
My medicines arriving on the dot injections in my buttock
Urine specimens that claim me
Bacterial cultures cardiograms telegrams
Screaming Kersy A hundred penumbrae
Insistent on my identity ?

My mother each morning fills the room
With a brave earnest smile provides the rest,
Habit years of training
Keep your head pull yourself together
Whose head love ? Who pulls whom ?
Managing Director pull Parsee together ?
Parsee keep Husband intact ?
Husband preserve Responsible Adult for posterity ?

High fever says Dr Baria does that you know
Hallucinations a marginal loss of identity amnesia
Sometimes I think of Kiran between two gasps
Thirty seconds away dying from asthma and steroids
Holding on I would like to let go
If you would clear this room
If I m not outfoxed by residual instinct
Of lymph and nerve and heartbeat I plan to spit out my pill
Tonight I plan to do it rather
Not do it wait for the Universe to show Itself or no
As it wills plan to lie still not waiting
For the turn of any tide

The Beatific Vision

What think you? This frenzy to record
Seize pen in fingers weakened by leaking
anus
Give permanence to personal trivia tape
laughter
Video recurring nightmare make home
movies of erotica
Slow motion cardiograms of the Vision
is t good?
Isn t even pardonable? Is Truth here?
Nobility?
Are motives tolerable? Audience captive?
Has t learnt to put up with me like old
wife
Predictable at tea? Nevertheless
Onwards!
Forward the Arts!
Brave flag of Spirit
Wave over my shrine at Iwo Jima!

I have seen Him

It is most bitter you understand to see
desperation

That drove Zen Monk Greek Patriarch
And Anchorite to *say* it
What ?
Something
Write book
Leave pronouncement
If nothing an inarticulate cry
A grunt
Somehow blaze tree
Arrange pebbles just so in sand to shriek
This is so I affirm it

But for me how ?
Give personal background ?
Swollen prostate infected bladder
Pain pushed so far that it turns to a fine
Caviar in the blood ?

What then ? Same old lies ?
Same old Truth ?
That the Whole blazes unity limit to limit
From the Halls of Montezuma to the Sands
of Tripoli ?
As Above so Below ?
Jesus Lives ?
Love Conquers All ?
Even finest spiderweb of Zen toucheth It not
No grasping Non-effort The Non attain
ment
All fall down
Old man Void swallows all

I have seen Him
But return (alas?) unchanged

Go on urge me on
Send me fan mail
Fill in responses
Answer questionnaires
Send me roses
That I may change my nature
Send me telegrams
So the world may be saved

Burn paper destroy tape Do not cling
nor turn away mine audience

It is here It is everyday mind
Not withdrawn It is world seen with corporeal
eye
Where wives are wives whores whores
Lawsuits lawsuits
After affirmation s forgotten poets silenced
Mystics dead It is here Like grilled steak
for lunch
Bank cheques bouncing dull patch of hospital
wall old gumboots

O most Holy O Love of the World
It shines

Three Explorations Into The Nature Of The Female Beast

I

Persephone In The Heavens At Midnight

Whatever your mortal fears of the night
Rational distaste for the dark eye of thieves
subdued hysteria
At the diurnal half in shadow if you shudder
at menstrual rags
Casually discarded at your doorstep worry
over the disturbances of pets
Suddenly observe your husband as homicidal
stranger mistake your bedroom window
For more than an opening in walls if your feet
stick
In the effluvium of dreams lay these all at Her
doorstep
Who eats you alive with your unknowing consent
But identify Her Whether you observe that
white lava face
Backwards through a home made telescope
whether you see
A thin Greek virgin scattered on Pluto s iron
phallus

Or more simply a young woman who in twenty eight
Houses will grow to the hag who haunts each village crossroads
Pay your tribute leave at Her feet from time to time

A flower or two as surrogate sacrifice
Or hungry as always She will take half your liver

And supposing you believe this not discard my rag tag
Sibilances supposing your walls are thick your bank balance
In order your car overhauled your food sensible and low in fats
Are you then safe ? Constrain Her apparitions
She will become Desire turning sour in your scrotum
Debar Her from your room She will enter your bloodstream
Dilate your carotid with strange esters with ergot and henbane
Control Her lunacy and She will make you Inquisitor
Refuse Her offer to become a tramp and you will werewolf instead
Into compulsive poet Retreat to hair shirt and cave

Her pull extends to Middle Earth hidden winds
Rains of blood subterranean snow fall of frogs
By night She frets in your sheets By day
Pale in the hidden hemisphere She commands the stimulants
In your morning tea

How then puppy friend adman husband householder
What escape for your quivering holiness?
Serfdom is your all Bend your knee call Her lady liege
Pay Her court send Her a personal invitation to visit
Pronounce Her wife and go in the arms of per sonal love
Beware Her impersonal mills Her scattered
Whirling resonances Wherever you walk She will measure your shadow
Take clay impressions of your footprint as dolls for needles
Her rotundum bears you Her strings puppet your limbs
Yet will She let you live if you love Her in Love's first hole
Or else without a word pack you away by accident
By strangulation or drowning without a mys terium to offer you clues
With causes as physical as Her tides

II

Madonna On The Beach At Sunset

Do not be taken in

Let not memory of you mother s lap
Nostalgic prancing on a sister s knee love of your wife s mouth
Becloud what remains of reason
As you watch Her sit amidst oceanic grapes and olives
The crescent moon chained to Her mundane slippers
Her mantle of stars beginning to glow
As our Father Sun slips to his perihilion under water
Butchered as usual sent to his burial station
In underbelly of octopus and squid

Her smile broadens as the night advances
Half sad half benign exploration of Her son
Changes to a grin as She scatters His underclothes,
Her new moon s mincing virginity shows
The coarseness underneath as the Houses change
From Fool to Hanged Man to the final terrific
Hag s pieta
O She pities you as She eats

Or potions disguised as chocolate creams
If by excess of gin or by simple love of you
She slips between your sheets She will take you
Beyond your planetary margins
Beyond blood stream and bile beyond horos
copy or meditative prowess
If you keep your lover s meeting in the well
of the Heart
If you kiss Her at the mouth of Love s first
cave

III

Durga On A Hilltop At Noon

Admire if you can while your gorge rises and
writhes
Into a medusa of deadly acids the passionless
justice of the Face
Scales equipoised in the Sun s corona at dead
midpoint
Of the day s solstice while the bull buffalo calf
Staggers in Balidan the carotid severed spasms
carnivorous carrot juice
And a river runs like placid amrita from Feet
Whose sacred signs flowers and coconuts
Make inviolate against your secret loathing
Her forked passion for Blood Nor must you
mistake
That passion as poisonous or furtive no covert
lusts here

But a divine calling forth a crystalline opening
of arteries
Her eyes untroubled challenge your house
holders walls
Her attendant demons clearly visible are your
daylight ghosts

Better you dare the vertigo of the flat ravine
beneath
Than look too long at the crest of that hill
More than vultures will gather there
Better you busy yourself with lungfulls of nico
tine
This too is Her domain in the Kingdom of
Plants
She nurtures hemp and henbane poppy and
grape
Visit Her back garden seed of dattura petal
of deadly nightshade
The giant Belladonna in Her kitchen Her
children distil
Hyoscine and Ergot liqueuers of morning Glory
Thus thus She keeps you asleep fattens you
for slaughter
With pollen wafted to your bedroom
From mushroom and cactus soothes the nerve
in your vagus
Deadens your adrenaline softens flow of blood
to brain cell
Sucks the marrow from your spine lets you
awake
Only in the arms of lust only five days a year
When she needs your erection

Those villagers whose dholak and mantra
Vivify the signal air understand this not
Only they feel a great voiding of the bladder
A clearing of sperm a lightening of blood stream
As the bull calf quivers In the summer heat
Rain will fall spines will straighten
Wheat grow tall barren daughters
No longer sinister their smile From time to time
This yokel will repeat
His mini sacrifice slaughter a cucumber
Smash coconut slice pumpkin retch out his guts
In a piety of oblation to his niche in the wall
To buy peace She cheats him
As She cheats you all

As for you my only not disbelieving
Wideawake reader who asks What then?
I offer these obscure instructions
Build no clay images offer no libidinous goats
Nor hairy bullocks for sacrifice
Take to a darkened room and build in your
imagination
Her image till it glows with light
Solidifies before retina exudes Her special smell
To reach your physical nose
Do not reach out and touch her not
However vivid Her mare s mouth
Keep your snake under cloth your bird in a
cage
Your sword awake as your will by your side
Then stiffening your spine Shiva
Offer Her your length of iron
To bruise the Mount of Her sanctity

Withholding it till She reduces to Her special
lunacy
To moans and begging
State your conditions firmly
If She accepts throw away your cards
Each major trump hold return Her surrogate
gifts
And promises and offer Her only love

Then if the time of night is right and the verity
Of your constellations tested in the Heavens
Trust Her hand as it kills She no longer
Beast nor Bitch nor Goddess but simply Woman
Your beloved in the Kingdom of Flesh
Trust Her as She leads
Through the hollow domains of your spine
Through secret navels opening to temples
Domes under hidden starlight arise King
Enter the place of thronehood
By candlelight by mothlight by the hooded
incandescence of glow worms
Guided by Her strange soft furry beasts
To the Feet of Love

Three Poems From The Book Of Divination

I

The Ghost In The Rice Fields

This then will be your strangeness your
uncommon lot
If you have grown a tropical hybrid
Running brown and naked under a solar logos
in this dense
Undergrowth of subcontinent confused by a
flash
Of cyan plumage monsoon foliage parrots
beaks
This will be your birthright of Anglican gloom
Bartered for a mess of Vedic pottage head full of
Shakespeare
And Kant palate bridled to Cognac eyes
lifted to distant Christs
In a pale sanctuary at Rheims with the Indian
wilderness
Thirty miles from your unsafe doorstep No
civilized
Durga here even no hierarchy of benign Vishnus
But red stones worshipped on hill tops as the
Mother Goddess

Goats slaughtered to Bhutas children strangled
By a Hindu vampire
Then when your supersubstantial bread arrives
You will find it divided torn by strange goats paws
In a parody of Easter Your ghosts when they appear
Under a full moon in Baisakh will bring no reassurance
Of trellis and transom no safe habitation
In winecellar and attic no heraldic abbots will produce
A safe and fairytale tingle up your spine no phantom coaches
Curdle your romantic stomach No my friend
These things were clogs and can be heard a mile away at dusk
These larvae if you meet them
Under dead tree trunks wear the face of lions
A lions mane an aura a tribal stench
The dead here speak a gabble two centuries old
A queer village Marathi to disturb your dreams
By the wash of the Arabian sea

From outside my window two furlongs away in the rice fields
This hag intruded on my sleep for seven nights
No apparitions no psychic signs no gooseflesh
Only a strange hoarse obscene cursing
A monotone sustained for hours
Not hate as you understand it not an emotion

But heavy and damp in the palpable air
Like physical blows Finally desperate I hoisted
my hurricane
And went out to face her Nothing to see
Only paddy stalks in the thin night breeze
And this continuous howling She was begging
for alms
What will you do with money old woman I said
The dead cannot spend Not money leave
me meat
Raw meat by your doorstep I am hungry
Leave me food or I will take your children
Bugger off I said I go back to Bombay to
morrow
Visit me there if you can live in the air of cities
Enter by the grille of my air conditioner we
will deal with you there
The next morning at the head of my bed
Impressed on a hard red cement floor was a
single
Perfect footprint

Are these ancient stories of astral vertigo
Veridic then ?
Stigmata produced by epileptics
Hysteric signatures impressed on the sacra
mental host ?
Is a man s lunacy prefigured not only in the stars
In atmospheres and auras
But in some way heavy and physical
Substantial as slap or scar ?

II

The Intrusion Of Miracles

Plainly I tell you Doctor Freud
Fragment of my hallucinated present *helpless* member of my audience
My judge in posterity God or Witness in my Here and Now
You my somnambulist guide or mo t awake and critical
But perfectly imaginary *biographer* remain unpanicked
By your own organic lunacy strange functioning of tissues
Revolutions of cell perturbations of *bone* marrow
Convulsions in hair root and *tooth* enamel glandular
Cataclysm cloudbursts of sweat haemeturia
Hypoglycaemic upheavals flutters in the dia stole
Breathing gone *to tatters* and ominous red lights
Foreshadowing *palsy or paralytic* stroke
Overcome finally the vertigo of your soul at loss *of body*
And you will push into a *strange* be ause unfamiliar

III

The Book Of Changes As Interpreted In The Changing Lines On Usha s Brow

Thrust cloven foot first into this world
Under a huddle of stars in Capricorn Sirius
my paternal Uncle
Orion s belt a lifeline into exile my mother s
ears freezing
In the cold of a preternatural January humped
Parsee
Grandparents fuddling with private anxieties
will he be fair
Will his nose be straight and Aryan under such
petty constellations
This damp and umbrous planet received a foot
and a half
Of pink infant and a bulbous head

Monkey face they chuckled Overhead
The Larger Bear froze the fabled Unicorn the
dewlapped Bull
Red Antares like some bearded Immortal
In sextile whispered Vanity will be his
monkey
He will wear a Persian beard Canopus sinistered
And shushed on the horizon His dreams will be
troubled

By avarice he will covet sports cars Bandy legs
said Procyon
His dog s head at the Ascendant A glut of
remorse
Stored in the liver and a weakness for nicotine
Underground in the hidden hemisphere the Crux
Australis
Poetry and a crust of metaphysical magma
Lava beds of psychosis
A fatal preoccupation with Freud In the ninth
house
Ganymede minor moon of Jupiter Write
him off
Cowardice will kill him by forty

Now prematurely forty I accept this death
And turn it to my advantage Now
flatly I disown my past
All you Archons all melodious Angelic
Orders
Gandharvas and Goatheads
Elohim and Elephants
Thrones and Dominions and Principalities
I request you forthwith
To leave Now shamelessly I return your
covert bribes
Smuggle back to their source in the Empyrean
Old cognac unbridled greed anxiety and
aphrodisiacs
Pipe tobaccos cured in honey gluttony
Sloth, gullibility and dual carburettion
Air conditioning and the odours of unused sex

That fester in my armpit give back to those
ancient bearded con men
In their planetary houses the unspoken
diseases of tomorrow

Do not smile you tubs of heavenly lard
against your occult gravity
In opposition square and trine
I posit my humpty dumpty wife Now
my piracy
Is suckled by her secret greed my anxiety
Focussed in her sciatic nerve If she lies
abed
I am lazy If she smiles I indulge the giggle
of my boyhood
I am safe

For here too in the feet I hold are hidden
spirals
Nebulae under skin zodiacal beasts
divinatory
Underbellies of crabs and eagles Here
too secret myths of light revolve
A minor scar on the thigh incites revo
lution
A seizure of muscle changes my orbit
the length of her hair
Affects my lifeline her upheavals of sex
Foreshadow the health of my liver In
denying one fate
I am seized by another Here too my
sextant points awry, my astrolabe

n black hearths, smells
king of flesh,
ams, blood that flows
t cities,
fruit, the air heightened
he back garden, cow

from Caucasian markets

h the front door of the

andles
withering in time s bower
deaden my erection

e white cell
cooing doves
unquickened by the sun
ich deadens my erection

ough the official entrance
monastery
starving Buddhas
meditating in the half dark
yful constipation ruined
tion

end it takes too long this
sides
ened come with me
it Under
Come God s

The Kitchen Door

And Ramakrishna said It is possible
Yes it
is possible by the use of the Tantric
method
to atain to Illumination Even sex used
with dedication leads to the goal But
why should you choose to enter by the
kitchen door when the front door
is available?

Why that even
I have often pondered good simple saint
Mother ridden Mahatma with mouth agape
In Holy awe at Kali s gobs
Offered to suck Is any man s beloved
Less sacred than your black image
Flesh less to be desired than anthracite
Any flea ridden tool less worthy
Of veneration than the caste mark on your
forehead?
That kitchen door you speak of has taken me
Half a lifetime to find and behind
Is such a sap and savour that official
entrants
And other gentlemen forfeit alive
In the white dusk of their souls secrets
hidden

Low fires burning on black hearths smells
Goings on the cooking of flesh
Slaughtered black rams blood that flows
under secret cities
Tastes of the only fruit the air heightened
With herbs from the back garden cow
dung
Gentian and spices from Caucasian markets

I have been through the front door of the
church
Altars and lilies candles
Chastened saints withering in time s bower
Gilt and incense deaden my erection

I have been in the white cell
Tiled floors and cooing doves
Breviary and icon unquickened by the sun
The hermit s stench deadens my erection

I have been through the official entrance
to the monastery
Low horns and starving Buddhas
Ramrod monks meditating in the half dark
The abbot s joyful constipation ruined
my erection

No no my friend it takes too long this
way besides
The other is more enlivened come with me
And I will show you as I found it Under
Norton s Hotel at Ranikhet Come God s
fool

Flap eared ass-bottomed come through
    the rose garden
And the kitchen door   See here the
    Alchemist
And his small fair wife   Be their drudge
Serve them and sleep on straw
And at the mid hour of night that other
    door will open
After seven years your Rachel
Come to claim her unearthly sweets
Of flesh

Enter my friend enter

GAURI DESHPANDE

Born 1942

Educated at Poona taught English for some time in the Fergusson College and the Poona University Three books of poems Between Births Lost Love *and* Beyond the Slaughterhouse *At present editing* Opinion Literary Quarterly *with K D Katrak and writing a biography of Gopal Krishna Gokhale Also writes in Marathi and translates from it into English She has two children and lives in Bombay*

Gauri Deshpande

Elegy For A Friend

Oh my country butchered blattened
and bludgeoned into flat
apathy consider this drouth
It will not kill you
Just enough sustenance to keep
you suffering will come from the heaps
in the world s coffers
sufficient sympathy will encourage
begging A few glittering gifts
couple of friendly words will prolong
your foetid leprous bag of bones life
till the next rain which will fail
again and again—
Even death is not your ally
Better resume diplomatic relations
so he will send a scourge
a fire deluge a final weapon
in your warfare with fate
It is the only aid that ll avail

Laying Of Ghosts

It would seem inevitable yes
that out of love I should bear your
children at least the one
that is expected the sun
to destroy ancestral darkness of nether
worlds
It is reasonable
But what of those I rejected
those that are dead
those accidental sowings cleaned out
in minutes without pain ?
Where was the love and the hate
and where generations of hungry ghosts
demanding their spirits food ?
An economic decision a legal social
or medical one
that denied my body to all but self and
such
liberated convictions came to my aid
that without a twinge it was done
That was reasonable

And yet I stumble over answers—
one or two or three or more ?—
What do I say usually with a wry grimace
One for all practical purposes
and yet did I not fulfil those

with them all? The born unborn
dead?

Since they were all borne
without any reference to love
it is reasonable

that one whatever and however in
defiance
of reason should be born
of that moment when seeing me wake
you smile
for that reason only

not medicine not gods and ancestors None
Only your total humility and surrender
to this fact of pain
It will retreat in the night for a month or
two
You can resume human disguise till its
next advent
and masquerade as person sane intelligent
loved and desirable Till the next time
then

Men And Women

I

Apropos K. D. Katrak's 'Persephone'

Well, yes. You're in the right there
but rest easy for it's not all that daft
you know nor dangerous the winning
of her love
or being safe in it so she don't erode
eat away your self in scorn neglect lechery
impotence
It needs but little—control and patience
as you say at love's orifices
so she's there with you atop the wave
and leaves her teeth in your shoulder and
neck
(otherwise you've had it she'll discard
and seek)
but also jewels flowers perfumes
chocolates
absurd bits of clothes allowance
for premenstrual tensions and fears of
pregnancy
the greedy lapping up of her every trait—
long hair or short

excess of inches or lack—
Ah leave nothing unpraised breast buttock
nose ear—but most of all remember to heap
continuous accolade for the meagrest craft
be it ironing cooking making dolls of shells
however useless however small

Then certainly my friend after this insidious
adulation amounting to obscenity
you could turn her essential contempt
for this great gowk of a creature her man
inwards that she could with such ease
be enslaved by your skillful hands
beggar s heart and from himalayan heights
condescend to warm your bed
stiffen your manhood
and bear your spawn

II

Up With The Sisterhood

There s only one thing you have to do—
lay it on thick till the very stars
in their heaven are put to the blush
and bet he ll think it his due
Say he is prudent when only timorous
and brave when a conceited jackass
Say it s his love that snarls like a dog
and generosity what is indifference
That he s a great listener when you know
damn well
the gapeseed dummy has hardly a thought
Call him a trusting innocent when a fool
and his snores sonorous like sea on shoal
And should he kick you in sleep it s love s
caress
whether he has bad breath or not still kiss
Think you it worth your while?
No? But consider and look upon
your drooping bust middle-age spread
lack of promotion or of job at all
growing children and falling hair—
perhaps we'll get through
on a few good days
supporting each other s flaws

RAKSHAT PURI

Past 45 years of age was educated at the Panjab University Was reporter and sub-editor on the Indian News Chronicle *of Delhi now defunct Joined a Delhi weekly* Thought *then edited by Arthur Moore In 1957 became New Delhi correspondent for the* New Statesman London *In 1961 joined The* Hindustan Times *as its South East Asia correspondent Returned to New Delhi in 1968 Presently he is an Assistant Editor on* The Hindustan Times

Rakshat Puri

Six Variations

II

At The Morgue

This stretch of misshapen time
At the morgue received its sudden
Stop in a celebration of laughter
And screams as picnickers passed
On a charabanc of rolling dreams

All flowers must begin and in the wooded
Years the spring time boys heave no
Sadness as they take their measure
Of the honey bee s song
And the rook s flight from a bow
Of desire

In the deeps between sound and silence
Where they say a music ascends like
A fine mist to the last design
Of knowledge the way is barred
By the sun s gloss on itinerant gulls
And thoughts vernal to summer seeds

The foam flecked profile of tomorrow s
Receding wave dares the lusting grasp
And the winged lunge

All flowers must end as we prepare
To meet the dark when the wooded years
Are still and the spring time boys
Have gone with the gull and the honey bee,
And a misshapen stretch of memory
At the morgue resolves to the supple shapes
Of a coming season

III

Vacant Hours

The past plays tricks of fancy on
The mind as it passes through
The wastes of please and thank you

And daily celebration of wit and love
And all the dynamism and drive
Of clever men with clever wives

Fragments return in vacant hours
Of voices stilled and dim gestures
Old and fractured concerns

Now resolved again to new equations
In a fine permutation of time
And slides of memory

As the present wings to the dark
Rooks flying home in the evening
Silently

II

Hare

A patch of burnt sienna
On the road where
The first houses raucous
In their heraldry meet
The traveller as he comes
Down from the north country

A patch with some hair
And two eyes left
Miraculously on the bed
To stare down the sky
As motorists avoid carefully
To hurt these remains

In the [illegible]al
Circumference of belief
The hare seeks perpetually
Vanishing grass in the air
Of the encroaching city

V

House Moving

It is a delicate operation needing
A sensitive touch and a firm
Grasp You feel your roots

Gently and without the slightest
Faltering you shift the heavy stuff
First of all then the middling items

Coming last to the flooring uprooting
The bugs and roaches who seek
Panicky refuge

Then to the careful replanting
The procedure reversed with first
The flooring then the middle items
And the heavy stuff last

The roots thrive with tending the bugs
And roaches return neighbours
Children plans ambitions trace
The sectors of the city

Thus the perennial transplant
The journey from habit to habit
From life to life from
Then to now

Those who cut adrift must blow
To the setting sun across autumn

VI

Multan

On the highroad of history this
City of graves dust and darveshes
Has breathed traditionally the stormy

Clash of revolutions as men sought
The elusive Meridian and fell
Or passed silently to the crossroads
Of knowledge

The revolutions of men are made
In the lonely fires that burn them

Wiser in our loaded times
We sit on their ashes rationally
Sipping coffee as we sing
Literature of protest
In a slow dream of oases

GIEVE PATEL

Born 1940

Is a Medical practitioner and worked for three years at Primary Health Centre in Sanjan a large village in the process of becoming a small town Continues practice in Bombay Work includes Poems (1966) Prince *a play produced by Theatre Group Bombay (1970) Is also a painter and translates from Gujarati into English He is married with one child and lives in Bombay*

Gieve Patel

University

Is there reason to believe the students
Of Dacca University were better
Than those of our own ? Need I repeat
What I know so well from my college days—
The dull corridors the vacuous library
The children of the poor in
Ill fitting clothes skulking
In corners those of the rich
Brilliant and febrile their sparrow brains
Ringing like jingles in their skulls ?
To be brutally shot why not is a kind of fate
—And the professors ! O professors
Stale malodorous with yesterday s coats
And neckties! A small family
Tucked away in the grimiest part of town
Pitiful bank balance tame sheep at home
At work holders of the flaming
Mark sheet to terrify
And subjugate monsters
And gently to amuse the affluent
Who know them harmless and by their first
Name—fredy eddie peddie—
Safe toys to smile at for two years

Before one puts away college
And good fellowship to join the beastly
roaring outside
They too were shot
To the last threatening to fail the assassins
And why should I moan ?
Yesterday s chicken meal saw
No less significant a slaughter
Can domestic fowl calculate
Right done them from wrong ? What
Was butchered ? Not a
Fierce choir of learning Not
Any newness that ten years from now
would
Spread alluvial across a parched country
Students
Dolls emptied into untimely graves
May your odour rise and trip up
Our brains Tell us
To change our thought

How Do You Withstand Body

How do you withstand body
Destruction repeatedly
Aimed at you? Minutes
Seconds like gun reports
Tatoo you with holes
Your area of five
By four is not
Room enough for
The fists and the blows
All instruments itch
To make a hedgehog
Of your hide Is that
Reason poor slut
To walk compliantly
Before heroes?
Offering in your
Demolition
A besotted kind of love
Red and black gleaming
Patches meat mouths
For monsters kisses?

Public Hospital

How quickly I've acquired it all
It would seem an age of hesitant gestures
Awaited only this [illegible] in mouth
Autocratic poise comes naturally now
Voice sharp glance impatient,
A busy man's look of harried preoccupation

Untroubled so to seem
My fingers deft to manoeuvre bodies,
Pull down clothing strip the soul
Give sorrow ear up to a point
Then snub it [illegible]
Separate essential from the suspect tales
Weed out malingerers accept
With patronage a steady stream
Of the underfed put flesh in them
Then pack them away

Almost
I tell myself
I embrace the people
Revel in variety of eye, colour cheek,bone

Unwelcome guest I may visit bodies,
Touch close cure throw overboard
Necessities of distance plunge
Splice violate,

With needle knife and tongue
Wreck all my bonds in them

At end of day
From under the flagpole
Watch the city streaming
By the side of my hands

To Exhaust The World Of Heroes

To exhaust the world of heroes
Is to flush your own heart
Clean Nobody
Is good enough for me ! Each
Prophet a two faced, fork tongued
Creature How about a side kick
To stride along with
Through muck and mire ? Tolerate
The leer of friendships which say
We two we two   everything shared
Moults skin after skin to expose
The cringing flesh of a need

To Make A Contract

To make a contract as contracts
Go quite arbitrary from
A universe of images pick upon
A tree or a rock or my fingers
And declare them god Perform
An act of worship—pare
My fingernails and weep profoundly
Before the crescents flying off
My hand—why—choose rather
A thing in the lowest scale
Of credibility—dirt or faeces
And run to it for sanctuary !

ADIL JUSSAWALLA

Born 1940

Educated at Oxford Taught at a Language School in London from 1965 1970 Returned to Bombay in 1970 One book of verse Lands End *Has edited the* Penguin Anthology Of New Indian Writing *mostly in translation Teaches in St Xavier s College Bombay He is married and lives in Bombay*

Adil Jussawalla

Approaching Santa Cruz

Loud benedictions of the silver popes
A cross to themselves above
A union of homes as live as a disease
Still though the earth be stunk and populous
We re told it s not our Papa ll put his nose
Down on cleaner ground Soon to receive
its due the circling heart encircled sees
The various ways of dying that are home
Dying is all the country s living for
A doctor says we ve lost all hope all pride
I peer below The poor invisible
Show me my place that in the air
With the scavenger birds I ride

Economists enclosed in History s
Chinese boxes citing Chairman Mao
Know how a people nourished on decay
Disintegrate or crash in civil war
Contrarily the Indian diplomat
Flying with me is confident the poor
Will stay just as they are
Birth
Pyramids the future with more birth

Our only desert, space , to leave the green
Burgeoning to black, the human pall
The free
Couples in their chains around the earth.

I take a second look   We turn
Grazing the hills and catch a glimpse of sea.
We are now approaching Santa Cruz   all
Arguments are endless now and I
Feel the guts tighten and all my senses
shake
The heart stirring to trouble in its clenched
Claw shrivelled inside the casing of a cage
Forever steel and foreign swoops to take
Freedom for what it is   The slums sweep
Up to our wheels and wings and nothing s free
But singing while the benedictions pour
Out of a closing sky   And this is home,
Watched by a boy as still as a shut door,
Holding a mass of breadcrumbs like a stone

Nine Poems On Arrival

Spiders infest the sky
They are palms you say
hung in a web of light

Gingerly thinking of concealed
springs and traps I step off the plane
expect take-off on landing

Garlands beheading the body
and everyone dressed in white
Who are we ghosts of ?

You You You
Shaking hands And you

Cold hands Cold feet I thought
the sun would be lower here
to wash my neck in

Contact. We talk a language of beads
along well-established wires
The beads slide they open they
devour each other

Some were important
Is that one
as deep and dead as the horizon ?

Upset like water
I dive for my favourite tree
which is no longer there
though they ve let its roots remain

Dry clods of earth
tighten their tiny faces
in an effort to cry Back
where I was born
I may yet observe my own birth

MAMTA KALIA

Writes in Hindi and English In Hindi has published one book of short stories and one novel In English one collection of Poems Tribute to Papa and Other Poems *She is married and lives in Allahabad*

Mamta Kalia

Tribute To Papa

Who cares for you Papa ?
Who cares for your clean thoughts clean
words clean teeth ?
Who wants to be an angel like you ?
Who wants it

You are an unsuccessful man Papa
Couldn t wangle a cosy place in the world
You ve always lived a life of limited dreams

I wish you had guts Papa
To smuggle eighty thousand watches at a
stroke
And I d proudly say   My father s in
import export business you know
I d be proud of you then

But you ve always wanted to be a model
man
A sort of an ideal
When you can t think of doing anything
You start praying
Spending useless hours at the temple

You want me to be like you Papa
Or like Rani Lakshmibai
You re not sure what greatness is
But you want me to be great

I give two donkey-claps for your greatness
And three for Rani Lakshmibai

These days I am seriously thinking of
disowning you Papa
You and your sacredness
What if I start calling you Mr Kapur
Lower Division Clerk Accounts
Section?

Everything about you clashes with nearly
everything about me
You suspect I am having a love-affair
these days
But you re too shy to have it confirmed
What if my tummy starts growing gradually
And I refuse to have it curetted ?
But I ll be careful Papa
Or I know you ll at once think of suicide

shadow of the mosque s cool minars
the flower seller
himself going on tea and taboccospit.
raffic policeman pats his uniform
before taking into his hand.
polis and suburb
g heavily from one into the other

nell of grilled liver and seekh kabab
outbids
ll of perfume on parked cars
f goats and green leaves conveyed
he highway s belt
eep-pen cow pen
changes into
blood and intestines
ng with flies
you flick a tail at
n into vultures over Slaughter
House

ne balcony at dusk
zzn calls
the Imam bends
the congegration
od His fourth meal of prayers

Saleem Peeradina

Bandra

I love the environs
of your body
and its many insights I recognise
every gesture act every foul thought
though I ll never understand
your central purpose I do not wish to
To grasp you is to cease to need you It is
your incompleteness inconstancy
attaches me to you

You re more than a sea front town
that came up the thoroughfare
to the railway station And passed beyond
its toy towers
to colonies that grew on your hands like
sixth fingers

More than a settlement
of shops cafes cinemas churches
hospitals schools parks
Your mud is versatile

•

There s no place like
Bandstand
It s away
from home If you ve tried the auditorium
you ll find the rocks allow more
elbow room

go on kissing

clothes and fish will dry in the sun
an arse will be bared and lowered on the
horizon
boys hunting crabs will eye you with
interest

you re anonymous here

Even
the pretty Goan ayah discards
her curry stains adds Afghan snow and
is ready to meet her greasy garagehand
waiting
also in clean bright Sunday disguise

*

Give everyone
What you ve given us

the supermarket departments the small
provision store the sitting procession of
hawkers
in the jostle of the road

to every hotdamp shitimmemorial lane
everywhere

You re newly poor
You re not even a true slum
There s a place transcends your choice

Experts call it Asia s best ever area
bred in superreal sewagewater
you can see
on any clear day coming north over the
creek
its swollen limb
thrives like a running boil

Elsewhere
a fellowship exists
at roof level
of blackened tiles and water tanks
Of attic study facing the gallery kitchen
facing
the terrace bedroom
Knocked out
windows drainpipes skylight all blend
lost in unbroken sleep

Awaken us on the heights
of Pali Hill In its green
lull Take us along
wild hedges into expressive old bungalows

Shows us beings
in whose healthy love of gardens
resides a gift of flower and birdsong

There s no place like
Bandstand
It s away
from home If you ve tried the auditorium
you ll find the rocks allow more
elbow room

go on kissing

clothes and fish will dry in the sun
an arse will be bared and lowered on the
horizon
boys hunting crabs will eye you with
interest

you re anonymous here

Even
the pretty Goan ayah discards
her curry stains adds Afghan snow and
is ready to meet her greasy garagehand
waiting
also in clean bright Sunday disguise

*

Give everyone
What you ve given us

the supermarket departments the small
provision store the sitting procession of
hawkers
in the jostle of the road

Give everyone

the villa
with carved furniture and large cool
lawns
and the ancestral Parsi nodding in the
verandah

A piano in every Christian home, floral
curtains
track trophies a graduate son three
wooden birds on the wall wooden crucifix

Give everyone

the bounty of Bandra girls
send them to church but keep them
large hearted

Give everyone

the vertical boom of concrete and brick
you never can resist inviting

the hero ideal newly risen
and the swift glint of his Impala

the local tough itching to prove
his muscle culture

the whore ambling in the halflight
the cripple s disjoined salaam

Once

every year

sweep your other hill with lights
dust with gold Mary of the Mount
polish the chest of seen delights
                                        your children
love to receive
with a dip and flourish of your wrinkled
                                                hand

*

Preserve Us
Take all
        evil spirits
                driven into an offering
and dropped
        from a train window
                                into creek water
o the sea

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

Born and educated at Cuttack At present teaches Physics at Ravenshaw College Cuttack Two books of verse Close the Sky Ten by Ten *and* Svayamvara and Other Poems *Editor* Grey Book *Translates from Oriya Has been published in* Chicago Review The Critical Quarterly New York Quarterly *and other American University Journals Has recently edited special issue on Indian Poetry for* South and West

Jayanta Mahapatra

Swayamvara

To concede embracing a barrier of time
blue veined kings vie with earthly gods
immured in this image of their own becoming
where the fairy tale princess of fecund grace
took one step into the deep-qualmed race
and understood that beneath
all their different acts of pride
and love modesty and age
lurks the fear of inadequacy s edge
they were each one together one
unrealised drugged and brief stimuli
of encounter withdrawn of their prey

While langour softly grips her belled feet
and sweeping across their starkly rigid looks
a victor s walk holds to walled wait
some slender hope of resolute heroes
nevertheless of chance denied but one
absorbed to build himself an ultimate god

PRITISH NANDY

Born 1947

Eight books of verse in print also many translations including Poems from Bangla Desh *Editor* Indian Poetry in English 1947 72 *Delhi and* Dialogue India *a monthly* Collected Poems *have just been published Presently he is public relations director for an industrial house He is married with two children and lives in Calcutta*

Yours Was A Fearful Secret Whispered In The Heart's Confessional

yours was a fearful secret whispered in the heart s
confessional

a night bird s laughter echoing in an empty
room

the chalice of night painfully fills as dusk re
treats behind squat mountains in silhouette
and an angry squall drapes you in burning
silk

silk is your revenous dark hair cascading onto
bare white shoulders

a slow sensual flame licking the wounds of the
rain

as his hands clutched his torn belly and he fell

the sun perplexed and pale saw a flaming village
cremate his corpse

He Returned Towards Silence

he returned towarns silence with stardust in his eyes

it was evening and from the brooding minarets
of the purple mosque he heard the muezzin s phantom cry

and as he signed his name on the faded leaves of shravan the night came like a savage rite

she stood ancient in her grief beside the greying manuscript of time and waited for him

as he returned towards silence with stardust in his eyes

Near Deshapriya Park They Found Him At Last

near Deshapriya Park they found him at last

nicotine stained teeth clenched in despair and
his long dirty grey hair reaching into the night

blood casually signed a wound that need not have
been there

for he was already dead

even when he sat on that broken bench wonder
ing about seven pairs of eyes and hunger that
had tracked him there

when they asked him to go they had not known
it would come to this

an empty chair and three files less business
went on as usual in Monohardas Katra

seven pairs of eyes and hunger waited for him in
that one room where he returned every night
except one

when they found him near Deshapriya Park
at last

his nicotine stained teeth clenched in despair and
his long dirty grey hair reaching into the night

Calcutta If You Must Exile Me

Calcutta if you must exile me wound my lips before I go

only words remain and the gentle touch of your finger on my lips Calcutta burn my eyes before I go into the night

the headless corpse in a Dhakuria bylane the battered youth his brains blown out and the silent vigil that takes you to Pataldanga Lane where they will gun you down without vengeance or hate

Calcutta if you must exile me burn my eyes before I go

they will pull you down from the Ochterlony monument and torture each broken rib beneath your upthrust breasts they will tear the anguish from your sullen eyes and thrust the bayonet between your thighs

Calcutta they will tear you apart Jarasandha like

they will tie your hands on either side and hang you from a wordless cross and when your silence protests they will execute all the words that you

met and synchronised Calcutta they will burn
you at the stake

Calcutta flex the vengeance in your thighs and
burn silently in the despair of flesh

if you feel like suicide take a rickshaw to
Sonagachhi and share the sullen pride in the
eyes of women who have wilfully died

wait for me outside the Ujjala theatre and I will
bring you the blood of that armless leper who
went mad before hunger and death met in his
wounds

I will show you the fatigue of that woman who
died near Chitpur out of sheer boredom and the
cages of Burrabazar where passion hides in the
wrinkles of virgins who have aged waiting for a
sexless war that never came

only obscene lust remains in their eyes after
time has wintered their exacting thighs

and I will show you the hawker who died with
Calcutta in his eyes

*Calcutta if you must exile me destroy my sanity
before I go*

the centaur s deathwish

death s
the
pattern
skeletoned against
a secret grudge

history s
the
broken
steeple

moral dreams clutching at
a whirlwind *of sorrows*

PRIA KARUNAKAR

Born 1946

Educated in Delhi and New York where she worked on Happenings and Inter Media *Since 1970 has lectured reviewed art free lanced for newspapers and magazines Continues writing and at present working on an allegorical poem in prose*

Pria Karunakar

Avatar Part V

We met in the wilderness
And as we came to camp we three
Giving the camels to crop
We discussed avidly
When the first cerebral heat abated
Exchange of divination technique
And ripened cycle of time agreed on
We each sank into our own thoughts
Watching the nervous flame lick the cold air
That which lives in fire
To which fire is the body
Whom the fire does not understand
That is Self Controller and Perceiver
The African—quick from Osirian Mysteries
Gave a deep belly laugh
The Persian heard aghast the clamour
Ahura Mazd pitted spear to spear with Dark

And I a Vaishnavite
Reflected on the sequence of avatars
Fish eye turtle ramping boar and ravening lion
The stride that covered all three worlds
(Yet hardly that Perceiver s self) and then

The Divine Bow and the flute that calls
All hearts to love that Charioteer
That calms the War s assault
With impersonal call to fruitless Action
So still the inner energy pivots itself
Trembling awakening into sentience stretching
It s unseen sinews to encompass All
And now I thought looking to the sky
What of this one ? What shall we hope for here ?

Ah yes the travelling was hard
It has been written elsewhere
The fleas the discontented retinue the coarse terraine
And much hostility in this new land this unawakened land
So drawn at last to the red spread-eagled child
At breast Contained ferocity of purpose
Haunted the pales of its eyes a New Birth
Crazed with lambency
In a place of straw and animal turds
This Child would not steal curds no nor dance
Divinely with milkmaids in Its adolescence
This other star born of a hard land of a mystic hardness

I marked its forehead with the upright tilak
Sadly pityingly and I withdrew

Later I heard It had crossed into death
Spread-eagled so and alone

Acknowledgements

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Island *London Magazine*
Entertainment *London Magazine*
Goodbye Party For Miss Pushpa T S *London Magazine*
Cry *Ariel*
For Kalpana *Quest*
For Elkana *Dialogue India*
On Bellasis Road *London Magazine*
The Hill *Indian Literature*

KAMALA DAS

All the poems published here first appeared in *Opinion*

R PARTHASARATHY

This Business *Opinion*
A Question Of Syntax *Opinion*
The Trumpet Sun *Opinion*
Tamil *Encounter*
Looking Into A Mirror *The Illustrated Weekly of India*
Rough Passage *Dialogue India*
Touch *Quest*

K N DARUWALLA

Black Rain *Opinion*
Easy And Difficult Animals *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

Death Of A Bird *Tri Quarterly* (*U S A*)
The Hero *Under Orion*
Aag Matam Unpublished
Sixth Moharram, 1393 *Indian P E N*
Haranag *Opinion*
The Epileptic *Tri Quarterly* (*U S A*)

K D KATRAK
All poems published here first appeared in *Opinion*

GAURI DESHPANDE
All poems published here first appeared in *Opinion*

RAKSHAT PURI
Variations Unpublished

GIEVE PATEL
University *The Illustrated Weekly of India*
How Do You Withstand *Indian Poetry in English 1947 1972* Ed PRITISH NANDY
Public Hospital *Times of India*
The rest are unpublished

ADIL JUSSAWALLA
Approaching Santa Cruz *The Illustrated Weekly of India*
Nine Poems On Arrival *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

SALEEM PEERADINA
Bandra *Quest*

MAMTA KALIA

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA
Swayamvara From *Swayamvara and Other Poems*

PRITISH NANDY
All poems taken from his various collections

PRIA KARUNAKAR
Avatar Part V *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

Bibliography

Poetry

NISSIM EZEKIEL
A Time to Change (1951) *Sixty Poems* (1953) *The Third* (1959) *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965)

KAMALA DAS
Summer in Calcutta (1965) *The Descendants* (1968)

R PARTHASARATHY
As yet uncollected

K N DARUWALLA
Under Orion (1970) *Aparition in April* (1971)

K D KATRAK
A Journal of the Way (1969) *Diversions by the Wayside* (1970) *Five Little Sermons Went to Market* (*with* USHA KATRAK, 1972)

GAURI DESHPANDE
Between Births (1968) *Lost Love* (1970), *Beyond the Slaughterhouse* (1972)

RAKSHAT PURI

GIEVE PATEL
Poems (1966) *Princes* (1970)

ADIL JUSSAWALLA
Land s End (1962)

SALEEM PEERADINA
As yet uncollected

MAMTA KALIA
A Tribute to Papa and Other Poems (1971)

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA
Close the Sky Ten by Ten Svayamvara and Other Poems (both 1971)

PRITISH NANDY
From the Other Banks of the Brahmaputra Masks to be interpreted in terms of Messages (1970) *Madness is the Second Stroke* (1972)

PRIA KARUNAKAR
As yet uncollected

Anthologies

Indian Poetry in English 1947 1972
Ed PRITISH NANDY New Delhi 1972

Contemporary Indian Poetry in English
Ed S PEERADINA, Bombay, 1972

Modern Indo Anglian Poetry
Ed P LAL and K RAGHAVENDRA RAO Calcutta 1960

Critical Works

Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English
Ed M K. NAIK S K DESAI G S AMUR
Karnatak University Dharwar 1968

Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English,
DAVID MCCUTCHEON Calcutta 1968

Indian Writing in English
K R SRINIVASA IYENGAR Bombay 1962

Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English
C. PAUL VERGHESE Bombay 1971

The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel
R TARANATH and MEENA BELIAPPA Calcutta 1966



Books on Poetry and Culture in ORIENT PAPERBACKS

The Panchatantra	Tr Edgerton	4 (
Religion and Culture	S Radhakrishnan	4 (
The Present Crisis of Faith	S Radhakrishnan	4 0
Recovery of Faith	S Radhakrishnan	4 0
Our Heritage	S Radhakrishnan	4 0
Love Songs of Vidyapati	Deben Bhattacharya	3 00
The Bhagavadgita	P Lal	3 00
Song of Love	George Keyt	3 00
Japji	Sangat Singh	3 00
Sakharam Binder	Vijay Tendulkar	5 00
Kanthapura	Raja Rao	5 00
The Serpent and the Rope	Raja Rao	7 00
Lingering Shadows	Mohan Rakesh	4 00
To Each His Stranger	Agyeya	2 00
Bhuvan Shome	Bonophul	3 00
The Last Mughal	G D Khosla	6 00